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10/764,446	01/27/2004	Franz-Peter Koch	P24670	8695
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EXAMINER

EDEL, JOHN B

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1731

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims **1, 3, 9, and 11** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by United States Patent No. 5,009,238 to Heitmann ("Heitmann").

As for claim 1, Heitman teaches:

- an input device [inlet 86 (col. 7 lines 15-35)],
 - a preliminary distributor [pivotable flap 92],
 - a store [supply 4, col. 4 lines 1-25],
 - an accumulating shaft [upright duct 16 (col. 4 lines 30-45)],
 - a sifter [col. 4 line 55 to col 5 line 55],
 - a conveying element [endless elevator conveyor 13, col. 4 lines 30-45],
- and
- an external delivery device [conveyor 76, col. 6 line 55 to col. 7 line 15].

As for claim 2, Heitman teaches the device being used to load a cigarette machine.

As for claim 3, Heitmann shows the accumulating shaft prior to the sifter relative to the transport direction [figure 1].

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As for claim 9, Heitmann shows an additional conveying element [the vertical shaft below element 7 shown in figure 1] associated with the additional store.

As for claim 11, Heitmann shows the stores previously described as being prior to the sifter relative to the direction of the product stream [see figure 1].

Claims **20, 22, 25, 32, and 33** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Heitmann.

As for claim 20, Heitmann teaches:

- introducing product [product inlet 87],
- a preliminary distributor [elements 92 (flap), 4 (supply), 6 (level monitoring device), 7 (rotary rake) and other associated elements found in figure 1] which distribute, measure out and loosen as claimed.
- storing product [supply 8, col. 4 lines 20-45],
- transporting product [elevator conveyor 13, col. 4 lines 30-45],
- sifting product [col. 4 line 55 to col. 5 line 55], and
- mixing product [conveyor 76, col. 6 line 55 to col. 7 line 15].

As for claim 22, the sifting occurs after the accumulation shaft [figure 1].

As for claim 25, the product stream is mixed with the further component during sifting¹.

As for claim 32, the product stream is mixed with at least one further component² that is delivered to the sifter via a common approach [column 17].

¹ The sifting process would inherently agitate all of the particles passing through and therefore further mix them.

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As for claim 33, the product and the further component is taken from different stores within the distributor device [supply 8 and receptacle 73].

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

Claims **1-2, 4-19, and 21** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Heitmann in view of United States Patent Publication No. 2002/0017307 to Barkman et al. ("Barkman").

The teachings of Heitman as modified by Barkman form an independent grounds of rejection based on a different application of the elements of Heitmann and Barkman to the claims.

As for Claim 1, Heitmann teaches:

- an input device [inlet 86 (col. 7 lines 15-35)],
- a preliminary distributor [pivotable flap 92],
- a store [supply 4, col. 4 lines 1-25],
- an accumulating shaft [upright duct 16 (col. 4 lines 30-45)],
- a sifter [col. 4 line 55 to col 5 line 55],
- a conveying element [endless elevator conveyor 13, col. 4 lines 30-45],
- and
- an external delivery device [conveyor 76, col. 6.line 55 to col. 7 line 15].

Barkman discloses what Heitmann fails to disclose expressly, namely that the elements of Heitmann may be rearranged so that the sifting precedes the duct/accumulating shaft

² See above footnote from treatment of claim 25.

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[paragraph 47]. Barkman and Heitmann are analogous because both relate to supplying tobacco for tobacco rod formation. It would be obvious to provide the sifting function found in Heitmann upstream of the distributor because Barkman directly suggests that the sifting function found in Heitmann may be located upstream of the duct [see figure 1 generally element 27 particularly] thus indicating that the sifting function need not be limited to the location shown in Heitman and motivating a person of ordinary skill in the art to substitute the sifting function of Heitman to the location claimed. Therefore, it would have been obvious to modify Heitman based on the teachings of Barkmann to obtain the invention as specified in Claim 1. All further references will be to Heitmann unless otherwise specified.

As for claim 2, the distributor device is arranged for loading a continuous cigarette machine [title].

As for claim 4, the combination noted in the rejection of claim 1 would have the accumulating shaft located behind the sifter.

As for claim 5, the distributor device separates fractions to be processed and not processed [col. 5 lines 10-25].

As for claim 6, the external delivery device can deliver any number of components into the distributor device [col. 1 lines 5-20].

As for claim 7, the device of Heitmann as described in either treatment of claim 1 is capable of delivering at least one additional component into the product stream.

As for claim 8, Heitmann shows one additional store [receptacle 73].

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As for claim 9, Heitmann shows an additional conveying element [conveyor 76] associated with the additional store.

As for claim 10, both the store and the additional store are associated with separate conveying elements [element 8 with 13 and element 73 with 76].

As for claim 11, Heitmann shows the stores previously described as being prior to the sifter relative to the direction of the product stream [see figure 1].

As for claims 12 and 13, Heitmann's duct 28 [col. 4 lines 40-60] is a common approach from the delivery device, store and one additional store.

As for claim 14, the sifter comprises two approaches [col. 4 line 55 to col 5 line 55; figure 1].

As for claim 15, the approaches are arranged one behind or above the other [figure 1] and the approaches comprise an approach for one additional store.

As for claim 16, the cross section of the upper approach is smaller than the cross section of the lower approach³.

As for claim 17, the combination as made under 35 USC 103 above contemplates further external delivery devices [col. 7 lines 45-65] behind the sifter.

As for claims 18, the one further external delivery device would be capable of delivering at least one further additive [col. 1 lines 5-20].

As for claim 19, the further external delivery device couples to the product stream [figure 1].

³ Where channel 43 joins the main product channel the diameter is wider than prior to where channel 43 joins.

As for claim 21 the combination of equipment described in 35 USC 103 rejection of claim 1 when operated would perform the steps of claim 20 (see above) and sift prior to the accumulation shaft, therefore making the content of claim 21 obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art of cigarette manufacture.

Claims 23-24, 26-31, and 34-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Heitman as applied to claim 20 above.

Regarding claims 23 and 27, Heitmann does not expressly disclose addition of a further component immediately prior to sifting. However, it would be obvious to add any component desired in the filler that would not be substantially removed by sifting at any point in the process (including immediately prior to sifting) because doing so would result in desired filler compositions. Such addition would bring the further component to the sifter via a separate approach in the case of 'including immediately prior to sifting.'

As for claim 28, it would be obvious to add a further component to the sifter behind the product stream for the same reasons as provided in the rejections of claims 23 and 27.

As for claim 31 it is notoriously well known in the sifting art that altering the geometry of a sifter/ altering the approaches to the sifter changes the sifting properties. It would therefore be obvious to do so to obtain different sifting properties.

As for claims 24 and 26, Heitman does not expressly teach the further component being stored within the distributor device, However, it would be obvious to store the further component within the distributor device because storage close to the

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"further components" destination would minimize transportation costs for the "further components."

As for claim 29 and 34, it would be obvious to mix any number of further components at the exit of the sifter for the same reasoning as provided in the treatment of claims 23 and 27.

As for claim 30, figure 1 shows the exit of the sifter has a diameter which is not substantially larger than the diameter of the either of the legs of the sifter which provide air to the exit. It is therefore obvious based on the conservation of mass that the air speed is greater at the exit than at other portions of the sifter.

As for claim 35, it would be obvious to mix a further component into the product stream (via a separate approach) for the same reasons as provided in the rejection of claims 23 and 27.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

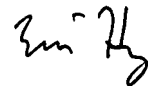
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to John B. Edel whose telephone number is (571) 272-4804. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30 am to 5:30 pm.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Steven P. Griffin can be reached on (571) 272-1189. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

JBE



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